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EMILY FRANCES FLETCHER.

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EMILY FRANCES FLETCHER, whose name has long been familiar to New England botanists through its frequent citation in local floras, died at her home in Westford, Massachusetts, April 13, 1923, in her 79th year. Born in the same town January 17, 1845 and educated at Westford Academy, she was early attracted by the plants and bird life of her region. To these she devoted much attention. The interest lasted through a long life, doubtless contributing much to her personal happiness, as did her observations to the botanical and ornithological records of the area covered by her activities.

Realizing the need of aid in the precise identification of her plants, she got into touch with that notable group of botanists of whom L. L. Dame, F. S. Collins, Dr. Thomas Morong, G. E. Davenport, Dr. C. W. Swan, C. W. Jenks, W. H. Manning, Dr. F. Nickerson and Mrs. P. D. Richards were leading spirits. These persons, busy in very different callings, were amateurs in the best sense, so far as their botanical work was concerned. Many of them were associated in the Middlesex Institute about 1881, and the preparation of a county flora became one of their earnest ambitions.

This aim was realized when, after some years of preparation, the Flora of Middlesex County was published by Dame & Collins in 1888. In the preface of the work the name of Miss Emily F. Fletcher appears with those to whom thanks are extended for helpful co-operation.

One of the particular difficulties in the preparation of the Middlesex Flora lay in the fact that certain portions of its territory were the seats of the woolen industry. About these, wool-waste was frequently used as a fertilizer, introducing many plants from very remote regions,

often species of difficulty since their geographic origin was unknown and their persistence usually very slight, many of them lasting only for a season or two, and often being found only at stages in their development not showing the characters for ready identification.

Westford was one of the towns where there were woolen mills and where wool-waste was thus used. Miss Fletcher, in consequence, found from time to time plants not present in any manual available to her and began to turn to the Gray Herbarium for aid in their identification. The determination of her plants often required much time-consuming search and critical attention, but the specimens were always welcomed as examples of "waifs" and "casuals" that must be reckoned with in any close local flora work.

Stimulated by success in finding several of these plants which proved to be of particular interest because introduced from widely remote parts of the world, Miss Fletcher for many years devoted special attention to wool-waste collecting, and met with much success. With the possible exceptions of the Rev. W. P. Alcott and Dr. Swan, she probably accomplished as much as any one in New England in this specialty.

Miss Fletcher left her botanical collection to the Gray Herbarium where it has recently been deposited by her executor. It includes 630 sheets, well prepared and carefully mounted. The plants are nearly all from Westford and, of course, noteworthy among them are specimens of her unusual "finds" on wool-waste.

Miss Fletcher left to the New England Botanical Club her copiously annotated copy of the Middlesex Flora, a work in the preparation of which her services were, as we have seen, very helpful.

In the noteworthy attempt to record the plants of the Boston District in a series of articles under the editorship of Messrs. Knowlton and Deane, which have long been running in our journal, Miss Fletcher's specimens are frequently cited, often being the only representatives of her region. Indeed she has in some cases been the sole New England collector of the species in question.

She has herself been an occasional contributor to our journal but in general, through great modesty, was reluctant to write for publication, preferring to have her plants recorded by others. In her own words she wished to be regarded as "an observer, not a botanist."

With the death of Miss Fletcher there passed from New England botany a devoted personality, notable for loyalty to a limited field of observation in which she attained unusual results.